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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4149
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0010

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 000092

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2019
TAGS: PREL PGOV KPAL JO
SUBJECT: JORDAN'S AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL NOT RECALLED
ALTHOUGH ON LEAVE IN JORDAN

REF: AMMAN 3389

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Despite Israeli media reports over the weekend, Jordan's Ambassador to Israel Ali Al Ayed has not been officially recalled to Jordan and his family remains in Israel, based on repeated discussions with Foreign Ministry and Royal Court contacts. Ayed was attending a Jordanian chief of missions conference in late December in Amman when Israel began its Gaza operations. Given Jordanian public protests over Israeli actions in Gaza including calls for Ayed's recall, it would be a difficult optic for him to return to Israel at this moment, so he is currently taking leave here, contacts have told Ambassador. Jordan is also very resistant to calls to expel the Israeli Ambassador, according to Jordan's FM Salah Al-Bashir.

¶2. (C) While the level of Jordanian-Israeli diplomatic ties remain unchanged, communications between the Israeli Embassy and the Jordanian MFA have been virtually non-existent since a January 5 meeting between the Israeli Ambassador and FM Bashir, said the Israeli No. 2 to DCM in a January 11 meeting. Direct contact with Tel Aviv on economic issues continues, however, with Jordan and Israel working closely to reach, in the midst of Israeli attacks, same-day signatures on a joint letter to U.S. officials on a shared trade issue.

¶3. (C) Comment: The GOJ will have to keep all of its options open, with official recall of its ambassador on the table as a possible next step. Jordan is also carefully watching what happens in Egypt. Any change in Egyptian-Israeli relations would greatly increase pressure on Jordan to follow suit. As noted in reftel, such a move would not be without precedent. From November 2000 until 2005, Jordan did not fill the ambassadorial vacancy in Tel Aviv in protest of Israel's actions during the second Intifada sparked when Ariel Sharon visited the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount in late September 2000.

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Beecroft